

New Life Baptist Church, Union, SC
Child Protection Policy
Regarding the prevention of sexual and other abuse

Purpose

This policy has been established to:

1. Help assure a safe, loving, and open atmosphere for children and youth, as well as adults who work with them, as they worship, study, play, and are nurtured in their Christian faith.
2. Serve as a guide for the prevention of childhood sexual and other abuse by setting and enforcing standards of ethical behavior.
3. Protect adults involved with children and youth activities.

According to our understanding of Biblical faith and what it means to be a faith community, we strive to follow Christ in word and deed. We are called by Christ to act with integrity and love in all our relationships, and to avoid exploitation of vulnerable people or the use of positions of power within the church or family. This policy reflects our desire to protect “the name of Jesus” as well as all those who worship and fellowship with the New Life Baptist Church Family.

This policy stems from our awareness that abuse has been, and continues to be, a major problem in society. Statistics show that the church is not immune to this problem; in fact, churches can be especially vulnerable because they are naturally trusting and unsuspecting institutions.

This policy outlines New Life’s position on abusive behaviors and its expectations for appropriate behavior regarding the care and supervision of children. Our goal is that all who attend New Life Baptist are able to pursue activities and worship in a safe environment where abusive conduct is not tolerated and where staff and volunteers are protected from false or wrongful allegations.

Definitions

Child Sexual Abuse is any contact or interaction between a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent, and an adult, when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third party. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced, whether or not consented to by the child. Currently, in the state of South Carolina, anyone younger than 18 years of age is considered to be a child.

Although this policy focuses primarily on child sexual abuse, all forms of child abuse are prohibited, and are included under this policy.

Sexual Harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It consists of inappropriate verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s sense of well-being by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment from the viewpoint of the affected individual. It is defined as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Although in a legal sense, the term “sexual harassment” deals with the workplace, the sexual harassment of anyone – including all adults and children – is prohibited in this church.

Sexual Misconduct includes: child sexual abuse as defined above; sexual harassment as defined above; rape and sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation; sexual behavior, which includes but is not limited to offensive, obscene, or suggestive language or conduct; unacceptable visual contact; and touching or fondling which is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another. Sexual misconduct directed toward a person of any age is prohibited in this church.

An **Approved Adult** is anyone 20 years of age or older who has a desire to work with children/youth less than 18 years of age and who has satisfied the requirements of this Child Protection Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or non-employee of the congregation. Approved Adults include, but are not limited to all staff, Sunday school teachers, Vacation Bible School teachers, youth mentors, youth group leaders, and nursery volunteers.

Policies and Procedures

Selection of Approved Adults

To protect the children/youth in our care, the following guidelines are established for those who desire to work with children/youth less than 18 years of age.

Approved Adults must:

1. Be 20 years old to work with children/youth and 25 years old to drive the church bus.
2. Attend NLBC for a minimum of six months.
3. Complete an Approved Adult application form. (Form 2013 AAA)
4. Sign and comply with our Child Protection Covenant. (Form 2013 CPC)
5. Attend a congregation-authorized training session which covers
 - * The Child Protection Policy
 - * Procedures to follow for all children and youth activities
 - * Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
 - * State laws regarding child abuse.

In addition, paid church staff, as well as children/youth workers, will complete a criminal records check authorization form processed by South Carolina Law Enforcement (form 2013 CRC). Criminal record checks will be administered every three years. The church will pay for these clearances. Volunteers who have attended for fewer than six months may work with children if an Approved Adult is also present.

Applications and completed forms will be locked in a confidential file under the responsibility of the designated pastor and/or paid staff member. Applications may be made available to the Child Protection Committee. Clearances are confidential and will only be made available to current pastors of the congregation.

Approved Adult supervision

In all church activities involving children and youth, no fewer than two Approved Adults should be present. Every attempt will be made to provide for this ratio. A worker combination consisting of a husband and wife team will be recognized as one Approved Adult. This scenario will call for at least one other Approved Adult to be present in the room. Workers who are at least 14 years of age may work as an additional assistant in a Preschool or Children's room but cannot count towards the two-person rule. The nursery should always be attended by at least two Approved Adults.

In Sunday school situations where only one Approved Adult teacher is available, another Approved Adult will be assigned as a "roamer," to move in and out of Sunday school rooms throughout the session. In situations where teenagers are providing childcare, at least one Approved Adult should also be present. The glass in Sunday school room doors must never be covered. If a Sunday school room door does not have a window, the door must be kept ajar.

Programs that involve minors should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision must be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Appropriate touch

Children need love. At times, this can be appropriately expressed through physical touch, such as hugging, a pat on the back, an arm around the shoulder, holding an infant or toddler, etc. If an adult working with children shows physical affection, it must occur with another adult present. Adult staff and volunteers should not force affection on any child. If a child pulls away, even with another adult present, the child's wishes will be respected at all times.

At no time should a child, even if fully clothed, be touched on or near the breasts, genitals or buttocks. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between a church worker or volunteer and a minor should be reported immediately in writing (form 2013 IBR & form 2013 MSPVA) to the appropriate Director/Minister. Any suspicious behavior will be immediately investigated. Inappropriate behavior of an employee may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Inappropriate behavior of a volunteer may result in the volunteer being dismissed from the program or his or her services no longer being utilized. Depending on the circumstances, the Church may also report the employee's or volunteer's behavior to the proper authorities.

Hygiene, diapering and bathroom policy

Teaching and ministering to preschoolers and children includes providing clean and orderly environments where the child can explore, create, learn, and play. Promoting good hygiene procedures is essential in order to provide protection from exposure to, and the spread of infectious diseases. Being aware of cleaning procedures and hygiene practices and policies protects and insures the health, safety and emotional well-being of preschoolers, children, their families and the church.

Because preschool and children's rooms are used frequently and by different groups, the following hygiene standards must be followed. These standards insure that the toys and equipment in every room are ready for use at any time. Teachers and children are protected from disease and injury, and

the church is protected in the event of an injury, accident, or spread of infectious diseases. Parents and teachers need to be aware of the Infectious disease guidelines. (Form 2013 CIP)

All preschool and children's teachers and workers are required to attend training where they will receive instruction in proper hand washing, use of gloves, and diapering techniques applicable to their age group.

Teachers will also be instructed how to respond to emergency injuries and illnesses as well as how to clean and disinfect materials, toys, equipment and rooms. Bleach water solution (form 2013 BWS) will be prepared for disinfecting cribs, toys, eating tables, areas where food is handled, toileting areas and teaching materials at the end of each session.

1. Teachers will wash their hands using the "Hand washing Procedures" (form 2013 HWP) in this document when entering preschool rooms and after engaging in any of the procedures listed below.
2. All teachers are required to wear gloves when changing diapers or assisting with toileting needs.
3. Avoid use of stuffed animals and fabric toys as they cannot be cleaned after a child mouths one.
4. After each session crib sheets should be removed, clean crib rails and mattress with warm soapy water, rinsing in clear water, and disinfecting with bleach solution.
5. Designate one crib for each individual baby during a session. Each baby should be changed in their own crib. Diapers should be checked at 30-minute intervals. Preschool children can be changed in the floor on a vinyl mat in the designated area. Disinfect the mat with bleach solution after each use.
6. After each session in the nursery and preschool room toys should be disinfected with bleach solution and leave to dry.
7. Used linens should be washed after each session.
8. All rooms should be kept orderly and clean.

In general, children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. In this way parents can assist as needed.

Diapering: Two approved adults must be present when clothes or diapers are being changed. A parent, caregiver (i.e. grandparent) or designee can also be recruited to change clothes or a diaper.

Two and Three Year Olds: An approved adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. If assistance is needed, the adult must leave the stall door open.

Preschool: An approved adult must accompany preschoolers to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the approved adult should encourage independence but can assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc.).

Before, during and after services

Teachers and volunteer workers will attend annual training regarding the prevention of sexual and other abuse.

All teachers must arrive on time (15 minutes prior) to teach their classes and must stay until the last child has been picked up.

Teachers of preschool students should wear name badges at all times while in the preschool classroom. Teachers should ensure that preschool area is limited to our preschool students, workers and staff. A ratio of 1 teacher to 4 students must be in place at all times to insure the needs of each student are met. A minimum of 2 teachers should be maintained in rooms at all times. Only preschoolers and teachers should be in the classroom. No parents of children can stay behind. **No children above 4 years of age should be in preschooler rooms.**

Children are not permitted to play in front of the building at any time. Due to safety concerns parents are responsible to monitor where their children are playing at all times. The play area gate will remain closed and locked.

Preschool personnel should clearly identify the child and the child's parent or legal guardian. Children should only be released to a properly identified and pre-authorized adult. Only a parent, caregiver (i.e. grandparent) or designee should be permitted to remove a child from a group or from a teacher's supervision for any reason. Only parents or those authorized by parents should pick up their children at the specified time. No SIBLINGS may pick up children from the nursery or preschool area. **Parents must sign in and sign out appropriately to pick up their children from the nursery and preschool areas.** (Form 2013 NSIO)

General permission slips

Children/youth must have permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians will need to fill out and sign a General permission form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church office. (2013 PPMA)

Overnight activities

Overnight activities involving children/youth will be chaperoned by at least two approved adults with at least one of the adults being the same gender as the minors. For all overnight events, a ratio of at least one worker per eight minors will be maintained. If the event involves children/youth of both genders, then there should be at least one Approved Adult of each gender. The designated pastor and/or other designee may waive the requirement for overnight-permission slips when the slip serves no useful purpose (for example when a youth is accompanied by his or her parent to the activity).

Transportation

Drivers must be 25 years of age or older, considered an Approved Adult by the Child Protection Policy standards and posses the required license set forth by the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles. The following guidelines should be followed at all times while operating vehicles owned by New Life Baptist Church.

1. Person reserving bus should obtain driver before reserving bus.
2. Person reserving bus should notify the church office who the driver is at the time of making the reservation.
3. The person looking to obtain a driver should contact the church office to check the approved driver list before obtaining a driver. (Form 2013 ADA) The driver should be informed of the destination ahead of time in order to plan a route to reach the destination safely.
4. The Transportation committee has the final approval on bus use.
5. The person reserving the bus will be responsible for the passengers on the bus.
6. The person reserving the bus will be responsible for insuring the bus is returned to the garage clean. (This means emptying trash cans and no trash left on the floor.)
7. It is recommended that eating and drinking be discouraged while on the bus.
8. If going on long trips, stops at rest areas should be approximately 2 hours apart and eating and drinking should take place at that time.
9. Majority rules when selecting a place to eat. If bus can be parked where several places are available you can have your pick. (This rule does not apply to children/youth under the age of 18.)
10. Promptness should be adhered to at all times not to hold the bus up.
11. Leaving times should be strictly adhered to. This will enable driver to arrive at destination on time. You should plan to be on bus 15 minutes prior to leaving. Person designated shall be in charge of passengers. Bus driver will be in charge of bus at all times.
12. All passengers will unload when refueling the bus.
13. An Approved Adult must accompany passengers on and off the bus.

Identifying inappropriate behavior and abuse

Church volunteers and employees should lead by example and therefore should not engage in any of the following activities.

A. Bullying

Bullying includes but is not limited to pushing, shoving, forcefully grabbing, verbal comments, or other aggressive behavior.

B. Lap Sitting

Children over the age of 5 should not be allowed to sit on the lap of a volunteer or employee. Volunteers and employees should use discretion when allowing children 5 and under to sit on their laps.

C. Counseling/Mentoring of the Opposite Sex

Under no circumstances should a volunteer or employee counsel/mentor a child of the opposite sex alone. Or without an approved adult of the opposite member of sex being counseled or mentored. .

D. Behaviors

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects. Examples include fondling; oral, genital, and anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape; verbal comments; inappropriate or pornographic materials; obscene phone calls; exhibitionism; and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

E. Physical Signs

Physical signs of abuse may include lacerations and bruises; nightmares; irritation, pain or injury to the genital area; difficulty with urination; discomfort with sitting; torn or bloody underclothing; or venereal disease.

F. Behavioral Signs

Behavioral signs of abuse may include anxiety when approaching the church or preschool/children's area, nervous or hostile behavior towards adults, sexual self-Consciousness, "acting out" forms of sexual behavior, or withdrawal from church activities and friends.

G. Verbal Signs

Verbal signs of abuse may include phrases like, "I don't like ... (particular church worker)"; "(A church worker) does things to me when we're alone"; "I don't like to be alone with (A church worker)"; or "(A church worker) fooled around with me."

Reporting suspected child/youth abuse

1. When a church worker or any member of the congregation has reasonable cause to suspect that a child/youth is a victim of abuse, whether the abuse occurred on the church property or elsewhere, that person will immediately report the abuse to the appropriate staff member. Together, they will document the report in writing using the "Child Molestation/Sexual Abuse and Physical/Verbal Abuse Incident Report" form (form 2013 MSPVA). This report will be submitted to the church's Child Protection Committee, consisting of the Pastor, the Minister of Education/Administration, the Church Business Manager, the leader/director of the ministry involved, and the Chairman of the Deacons. The leader of the Ministry Team will be the Pastor or a staff member appointed by the Pastor. The purpose of this group is not to conduct an in-depth investigation but to remain unbiased and supportive of all parties involved, recognizing that allegations of abuse are devastating to both the accuser and the accused. The process of reporting will be carried out tactfully, discreetly, and without bias on the part of the reporting agent.

2. The Pastor and/or Ministry Team Leader will immediately contact an attorney and the church's insurance company for advice on how to handle the incident and the appropriate actions to be taken.
3. An allegation of abuse will not be treated as an actual occurrence pending the completion of the investigation. The church will take steps necessary to protect the integrity of the persons involved. The Ministry Team will prepare a brief statement about the allegation of abuse to share with the congregation. This statement will inform the congregation that an allegation of child abuse has been made without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, or revealing the identities of the child, the child's parents, or the alleged abuser.

Reporting Inappropriate Behavior

There are some behaviors that do not constitute abuse but, nevertheless, could place a child in danger of being abused. When a church worker or any member of the congregation has reasonable cause to suspect someone is engaging in such inappropriate behavior, the individual should document and report such incidences to the appropriate Director/Minister (form 2013 IBR).

Response to the Reporting of suspected child/youth abuse

1. Maintain Adequate Records

Up-to-date workers' applications, references, and screening forms will be on record in a confidential locked file. All workers will be rescreened on a yearly basis.

2. Spokesperson

To protect the child and the accused, information regarding the complaint and the investigation will be limited to only those with a need to know in the Church organization. The Pastor will appoint a spokesperson who will be designated as the church person responsible for responding to inquiries from law enforcement, social services, the media and the congregation. The spokesperson will work with legal counsel and the ministry team to develop all communications.

3. Prepare A Position Statement

A clear position statement of our church regarding child sexual abuse will be developed in consultation with legal counsel for public use when an allegation occurs. It will include our policies and established safeguards.

4. Emotional Response

The church will avoid inappropriate responses to allegations including denial, accusations and minimizing the events. The Ministry Team will provide information concerning resources available to help the accused and the alleged victim and family deal with the issue.

5. Use An Attorney

The church's attorney will be contacted immediately to provide legal counsel until the issue is resolved. She/he will be present when the spokesperson is answering any investigational questions

from the police or social service agencies. The attorney will also be consulted before the spokesperson talks with the media.

6. Notification

The Child Protection Committee will provide the appropriate staff, such as the Director of Preschool & Children's Ministries, Youth Pastor, etc., a current copy of the Sexual Offenders Registry for the surrounding areas at least once a year.

Additionally, these steps will be followed:

1. The person suspected of abuse will discontinue his/her work with children/youth until the allegation can be properly investigated.
2. The Senior Pastor and Deacons will notify parents or guardians of all children/youth involved in an alleged incident. Discretion may be used if the parents or guardians are the person suspected of the abuse. All phone calls or visits will be documented. (Form 2013 CPCL)
3. In the event that a church-related incident has occurred, the Senior Pastor or Chairman of Deacons will notify the congregation's insurance broker and/or carrier when the reporting procedures have been initiated. All contacts will be documented.
4. The Deacons will determine whether the congregation shall engage legal counsel in consultation with the insurance carrier.
5. The Deacons will authorize the Church attorney, Senior Pastor or Chairman of Deacons to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only that person may speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

Providing community for known sexual offenders:

Known sexual offenders who have fulfilled their sentences, are willing to participate in victim offender reconciliation meetings, and abide by the guidelines noted below, are permitted to attend worship services at New Life Baptist Church.

Minimum guidelines under which a known sexual offender may participate:

1. **Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the Senior Pastor or paid staff member with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
2. **Offenders will not accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of this church. Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.
3. **The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes.** The CPC may designate a specific service and time for attendance. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
4. **At no time should the offender deliberately place him or herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others.**

5. **If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation,** the Senior Pastor or paid staff member will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.

Child Protection Committee (CPC)

The CPC will include the Senior Pastor or paid staff member, a nursery committee representative, the Chairman of Deacons, and one member appointed at large.

The committee will:

1. Implement, enforce, review, and revise this Child Protection Policy as needed.
2. Provide training for all staff and Approved Adults regarding child abuse and this Policy.
3. Maintain a list of Approved Adults.
4. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
5. Be accountable to the Senior Pastor and Deacons.
6. Be kept apprised of investigations.
7. Keep file of General permission slips up to date.
8. Provide appropriate staff a current copy of the Sex Offenders list each year.

The designated pastor will:

1. Review all applications for Approved Adults.
2. Collect and forward requests for clearances, with cover letters, to South Carolina Law Enforcement.
3. Maintain all clearances.
4. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
5. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her own clearance reports.
6. Review children/youth attendance records.
7. Meet with and review known sexual offender's adherence to guidelines and covenants

The CPC chair will be appointed by the Senior Pastor and will:

1. Document that required forms are received for all applicants.
2. Have access to applications but not clearances.
3. Chair committee meetings.
4. Ensure that annual congregation-authorized training sessions are held, and videotaped for subsequent viewing and training.